

BLUNT INSTRUMENTS

#5 — "THE 'DICK NIXON '88' ISSUE"

DECEMBER 12TH, 1987

Oh-oh-oh, so twice a year isn't *good* enough for you, eh? Got to have *more issues*, wot? Maybe even some *games*, eh? Rubbish, rubbish....

If you haven't received your copy of *BI* #4 by now, please inform me. It appears that quite a few copies of that issue were never delivered. As far as I can determine, all of those copies were sent out together, having been taken to the post office in a single large box. I'm wondering now whether that box never made it out of the bulk mailing station. I don't mind dropping the \$50 or so, but I *am* concerned if I can't trust a shipment of copies to get one their way once I turn my back. I've put a tracer on it, but I won't know anything for a while. In any case, it's a major inconvenience, and I apologise. I cut all trades with the last issue, but because of the postal screw up, every trader who was to have received #4 is getting this issue as well.

This issue is dedicated to Jim Burgess, who graphically demonstrated his boobishness by stating in his TOMATOCON report (*in The Abyssinian Prince*) that I am "not a wimpy nerd." Gosh, thanks for clearing that up, Jim. I wasn't aware that it was ever a question. Actually, if it *was* a question, I'm a bit nervous. Maybe this zeen is giving people the wrong idea. Well, everyone who was at PUDGECON should have no questions regarding me, my appearance, or my personality. Pete Gaughan, on the other hand, was, well ... uh, Jeff, finish this sentence for me.

Incidentally, I finally broke down a few months ago and bought a Macintosh. I was going to wait a bit and buy an SE, but I decided that by that time (a few more months) the new version with the hi-res color monitor would be available. Also, the Mac II would be fully tested, and that would become an option as well. In any case, I can type all of this while sitting at home listening to Lisa Lisa and Cult Jam, so I guess that's a bonus.

This issue's contest is a sort of word game. Repeated subtly throughout the text of this zeen is a secret, six-word code phrase. The first person to successfully identify the phrase and inform me of the fact will win an official autographed photograph of the Bad Boys. There are a variety of Bad poses to choose from, so act now! Beware of slight variations designed to throw you off the track, though.

By the way, the subtitle for this issue is not a joke. If Richard Nixon ran for president, he'd have my vote. I won't go into the reasons for this, but there certainly are plenty of them. Of course, if he were elected, Michael Hopcroft would have to write to him to make sure he still got his welfare checks.

Speaking of Michael Hopcroft, this issue contains a special edition of Steve Clark subbadzine, *Furball*. *Furball* normally appears in *Random Thought*, but Steve asked me to include it here. For those of you who don't know, Steve is the naughty person behind "Reality Check" (a copy of which is also included in this issue), and is a living example of the First Principle of Bad Boyishness, "ridiculing people for sport". Whether the ridiculing is done in good or bad taste apparently doesn't concern Steve very much.

Blunt Instruments a Diplomacy journal published by somebody who "probably has a higher I.Q. than you do." He was ably assisted in his editorial capacities for this issue by one Steven Clark, Bad Boy of some reknown. The address is 5528 S. Everett, Apt. 3D, Chicago, Illinois, 60637. His telephone number is (312) 324-6460. Subscriptions are \$1.10 for single issues, or \$10 for ten, but see the last page. Warning—The Reality Surgeon General has determined that this issue of *BI* pulls no punches. Those with low self-esteem and/or an inability to stomach insults are advised to go back to reading insipid zeens full of sickening flattery and mutual ass-kissing, of which we could name a few but won't. Diplomacy is a trademark of the Avalon Hill Game Company, and is not a substitute for normal social interaction.

Civilization

Papa Legba

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Well, since I can't get enough players for a *British Rails* game, I might as well try *GMing Civilization*. Rules and map were published in *BI* #3, and all the players should have their flyers by now. I'm very interested to see how this works out. One of the things about postal *Civ* is that you actually have to play by the rules. One of my favorite ploys, "fudging" my civ card buys ("Yeah, these Wine cards and those Grain cards should be enough to get me Democracy. What? How much? Er, well, just trust me—I wouldn't cheat."), is inoperative postally (at least if the GM is competent). Still, I *suppose* it can be fun, even if there is no cheating.

In addition, Claude Morest was kind enough to send along this list of names for all the spaces on the map. If you don't like alphanumeric notation, you can use the list. I don't know, but it looks like someone has been reading too much Herodotus....

A1	Germania	F2	Arabian Desert	L4	Mazaca
A2	Lugia	F3	Arabian Coast	L5	Melitene
A3	Noricum	F4	Red Sea	L6	Middle Armenia
A4	Cisalpine Gaul	F5	Upper Ægyptus	L7	Cilicia
A5	Pannonia	F6	Nubian Desert	L8	Lower Armenia
A6	Etruria	F7	Hierkonpolis	L9	Upper Mesopotamia
A7	Umbria	F8	Luxor	M1	Bithynia
A8	Illyricum	G1	Antochus	M2	Sardis
A9	Dalmatia	G2	Palmyra	M3	Ancyra
B1	Corsica	G3	Jordan	M4	Lydia
B2	Roma	G4	Lebanon	M5	Ephesus
B3	Apulia	G5	Sidon	M6	Rhodes
B4	Caralis	G6	Damascus	M7	Lycia
B5	Sardinia	G7	Tyre	M8	Cyprus
B6	Neapolis	G8	Jerusalem	M9	Nicosia
B7	Tarentum	G9	Jericho	N1	Epirus
B8	Calabria	H1	Elymais	N2	Corinthus
C1	Numidia	H2	Persepolis	N3	Eretria
C2	Carthage	H3	Chaldea	N4	Athenæ
C3	Palermo	H4	Babylon	N5	Mycenæ
C4	Sicilia	H5	Southern Babylonia	N6	Sparta
C5	Syracusæ	H6	Lagash	N7	Melos
C6	Zama	H7	Sumer	N8	Gortyn
C7	Subnumidia	H8	Ur	N9	Knossus
C8	Libya	H9	Charax	P1	Chios & Lesbos
C9	Sahara Desert	J1	Iberia	P2	Troia
D1	Leptis Magnis	J2	Albania	P3	Byzantium
D2	Eastern Sahara	J3	Armenia	P4	Thasos
D3	Tripolis	J4	Atropatene	P5	Thessalonika
D4	Cyrene	J5	Hyrcania	P6	Southern Macedonia
D5	Libyan Desert	J6	Cteisphon	P7	Eastern Macedonia
D6	Cyrenaica	J7	Media	P8	Corcyra
D7	Western Egyptian Desert	J8	Persia	R1	Moesia
D8	Lower Ægyptus	K1	Sarmatia	R2	Dyrrachium
E1	Alexandria	K2	Crimea	R3	Northern Macedonia
E2	Pelusium	K3	Khersonesus	S1	Adriatic Sea
E3	Upper Sinai	K4	Scythia	S2	Tyrrhenian Sea
E4	Memphis	K5	Dacia	S3	Ionian Sea
E5	Suez	K6	Olbia	S4	East Mediterranean Sea
E6	Arabia Petræa	K7	Tyras	S5	Ægean Sea
E7	Amarna	L1	Pontus	S6	Black Sea
E8	Cush	L2	Trapezus		
F1	Petra	L3	Colchis		

Pudge Won't Budge

Fast Cars, Fast Women, Bad Boys (of Dip)

Our sojourn into the wilds of Kansas began with a rather unlikely phone call from Jeff Zarse. Actually, considering the frequency of Jeff's calls, the call itself wasn't all that unlikely. The words, "Hey, Geryk, wanna go t'Pudgecon?" were a bit out of the ordinary, though, especially since the date of Pudgecon was the week that Jeff was going to get back from Dartmouth. Since he had to return there only two or three weeks later, I didn't think he would want to spend an entire weekend driving out to Wichita. Boy, did I misjudge Jeff.

After some quick consultation, it was determined that Jeff, Steve, and I would make the trip together in order to magnify the personality effect. It seems that our level of obnoxiousness increases geometrically with the number of Bad Boys present. If the people at Tomatocon (see next con report) thought we were bad, they should thank God that Steve couldn't make it.

Later amendments to the plan included a stop in Westchester to pick up our favorite obnoxious non-Bad Boy, Russ Rusnak, and a stop at the store shortly thereafter to pick up three pairs of earplugs. Unfortunately, we realized that with earplugs on we couldn't hear the stereo, and decided that twelve hours of silence were worse than twelve hours of Russ. We were later to regret this decision.

Actually, of all the events of that weekend, I remember the ride down in the most detail. Jeff and I had brought tons of tapes, and treated Steve and Russ to twelve straight hours of R.E.M., New Order, Depeche Mode, Blancmange, The Smiths, INXS, and Erasure. Steve had brought some Jethro Tull and Russ brought his dreaded Zappa, but the two of us in the front seat quickly nixed that. Russ suggested a session of *Titan* Battleboards in the back seat ("No one is really good at them"), but one look from Steve nipped this ridiculous idea in the bud. To pass the time, Russ decided to explain at great length why public education was a stupid idea. Jeff, Steve, and I take great pride in the fact that after several hours, we were the ones talking and Russ was the

one scratching his head. Of course, he does that a lot.

Jeff did all the driving, and combined with the fact that he had stayed up the previous night and taken a plane from La Guardia that afternoon, he was extremely tired. This showed in his driving, which was occasionally erratic and always exciting. "Hey, Jeff, your Titan just got hit by three Serpents, two Hydras, and an Archangel!" *Screeeeetch!!!* This sort of thing was required periodically to keep him awake.

Somewhere near the Missouri-Kansas border, we ran across a nasty accident involving an eighteen-wheeler and a pickup going in opposite directions in the same lane. We ended up a mere three cars behind the scene, and Russ took advantage of our proximity to do a little "Indian scouting", which involved hefting a Coors, talking to truckers, and searching for body parts. The remaining three of us managed a little nap in the car, and when an ambulance pulled up in front of us with its flashing lights, we nonchalantly donned our shades. Russ couldn't seem to comprehend this, as it was about four in the morning.

We got to Bob Olsen's without any further delays, arriving at around ten, and were greeted by Bob, the Langleys, and the Gaughans. Russ immediately launched into a description of our journey, and the three of us slipped in and out (individually) to shower off. Before I left for my shower, I passed out some copies of *BI* #4. Because I was cutting trades with that issue, I enclosed a refund check to Steve Langley for all the extra issues he had sent me. Steve had sent me a note a few weeks earlier with *Magus*, which read, "If you're folding, shouldn't you let us know?" Consequently, I enclosed a note for him—"Fold THIS, bub." Apparently, this baffled Steve for several minutes; but then, what doesn't?

After the showers, it was *Titan* time. Six of us (Pete Gaughan, Russ, Don Scheifler, Steve, Jeff, and I) began the festivities. Pete won, taking me out for the victory after several hours. There was a lot of *Titan* play that weekend, and all I had to

show for it was a one-on-one victory against Mark Frueh. Not too good for seven games.

At this point, the entire weekend fades into a blur (and what do you expect—it was in September). From here on, I'll just hit whatever highlights come to mind. If this part looks like Zarse's report, let's just say he had a good idea for dealing with memory lapses.

- Steve, Jeff, and I were suitably obnoxious all weekend.
- We kept a suitable amount of vodka on hand, and mixed it with Daf's ginger ale, which we had to drink because we had plenty of vodka but no mixers.
- We went to Burger King one night and came back with paper crowns, in which we posed for some silly photos.
- We went to the store to get food and Jeff exploded a can of Sprite on a Twinkie display, much to our merriment. We didn't stick around too long, though.
- Jeff and I played a team *Trivial Pursuit* game which we lost because Daf had memorized all the cards. I stayed up all night on Friday to talk to Russ, Matt Fleming, and Steve Langley about things like the feud, WAP, and what it's like to live within twenty miles of James Wall and be on his hit list.
- I paid Jeff \$5 because he had made me a bet that Steve Langley looked exactly like the drawing of the guy on the cover of *Magus*. He was right.
- Bob Olsen wimped out of an *A House Divided* game with me by pretending all weekend that he had "already committed to another game, but maybe after that." Sure, Bob.
- Nancy Irwin was not amused by the Bad Boys' antics during the *Trivial Pursuit* game. We weren't too concerned.
- Bob Olsen started to tell a Civil War joke, which involved the question, "What were the last words of a famous Union general when warned about the close proximity of Confederate snipers?" Before Bob could deliver what I'm sure would have been a dandy punch line, Steve inserted "blow me

hard!" This has since become an official Bad Boys-approved thing to say.

- Steve next coined the phrase "clusterfuck" in describing a particularly crowded section of a *Survive!* board. This term was subsequently used (also with great success) to refer to twelve *Civ* tokens stacked together in a non-city site.
- Jeff won a *Civilization* game because I screwed over Don Scheifler by picking up the last Democracy card when I had no chance of winning. Don wouldn't speak to me for at least the next half hour. By the way, he has since gotten a new job.
- Pete Gaughan wore one of the stupidest hats (a fishing hat) that I've ever seen. Not only that, but he wore it all weekend. I see he goes to Field's a lot. Jeff mused that he did it to hide a bald spot. I think Jeff plans to call Cathy and ask her about it sometime.

Taken together, it was a great time. Bob was an excellent host (he even has good taste in music), and I can safely say that it was the best con I've ever attended (of course, this includes only this Pudgecon, Dipcon, and two Tomatocons). When we left, it was with a very subdued Rusnak (although I think at the end we got annoyed with him and started insulting his friends). One thing we *did* make fun of him for (and are still doing so as I speak) was his comment that he "blew a wad" at Ponderosa. We reached the conclusion that the only way to actually "blow a wad" at that place would be to either a) go there every day for the next six years, or; b) order dinner for Daf and Bob. Russ has obviously never experienced real dining. We briefly considered taking him to L'Escargot, but decided that it was a bad idea (his suits probably all say "Fubar" on them).

We got to Chicago at about midnight. After dropping off Russ, we headed for the University. Someone suggested (jokingly) that we now play *Titan*. We had just played *Titan* for about seventy-two straight hours. We were tired, had had too much to drink all weekend, and had just finished another twelve hours of listening to Russ.

I was Red, Jeff was Brown, and Steve was Blue. We finished at three-thirty.

Conrad von Metzke wasn't there, but we drank to him anyway.

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29th August 1987

Dear Mr Geryck,

The Miller Number Custodianship

Various papers concerning the present dispute about the position of the Miller Number Custodian have been distributed. So far, it does not seem that any attempts at resolution have been successful. In fact, this seems to be because the issue themselves have become confused, and inter-twined with a conflict of personalities.

The only way for this to be properly resolved is for the details and personalities to be first set aside. Then, the broader issues and General Principles of the hobby can be examined and applied to the situation, so as to arrive at an objective and sensible conclusion.

As a party not involved in the dispute and with wide experience of hobby activities and international contacts, I have sought to do this, on behalf of the Diplomacy Variants Commission and the wider hobby.

I welcome any reasoned and reasonable comments on the particular dispute the wider issues and the points outlined on the enclosed sheets; Though I should add that conclusions listed seem to be the only proper ones in the circumstances.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Poole

Andrew Poole
for the Diplomacy Variants Commission

Circulation - see attached list.
There are no restrictions on the further copying and distribution of this document, as long as it remains unadulterated.

DIPLOMACY Variants COMMISSION

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

(forming part of the internationally accepted 'Common Law' of the hobby)

1. In the absence of any central hobby organisation, positions of responsibility, such as Custodians of Hobby services, are held by individuals, who are responsible both for fulfilling their particular role and for arranging a successor. This decision is theirs alone and cannot be pre-judged by any agreement with another party. It is wise for previous post-holders and prominent hobby members to be consulted, but their opinions only have the status of advice.
2. Though the decision rests solely with the present post holder, any new appointment does depend for legitimacy upon the support and acceptance of the wider hobby. This is usually forthcoming if the appointee is reputable and sufficiently widely known. However, it is difficult for any hobby service to function in the absence of consent. The legitimacy of a post holder is not decided by their line of descent (as with monarchy) but their general acceptance as the rightful post holder by the hobby (as in democracy).
3. Where a post holder ceases to function without having arranged for a successor, it is the accepted practice that notable individuals in the relevant field will step-in to retrieve any files and re-establish the service. This usually includes the establishing of a new custodian, though in this case the opinion of other interested parties and consent of the wider hobby is of greater importance.
4. The amateur status of the postal hobby is commonly accepted and strongly upheld. All post holders (and zine editors) are thus volunteers who carry out the actual functions of any position without payment. It is accepted that users/subscribers are normally charged only unavoidable costs such as for printing, postage, stationery etc. (ie. labour is not included). In principle the money is paid for and to the service, not the individual.
5. All post holders are expected to be responsible in fulfilling their role and trustworthy. honest in their dealings with others and not to bring their service or the hobby into disrepute. When this is found not to be the case, the post holder is responsible for any restitution and apologies. If these are not forthcoming, the consent of the wider hobby is likely to be forfeit and the post holder renders themselves liable to be considered to have ceased to fulfil their function properly and thus be replaced (see 3).
6. Whilst the assets and liabilities of any service are the responsibility of the present holder, the titles of zines are commonly held to be the property of the originator and are subject, ultimately, to copyright. However, in the case of zines which fulfil the role of a hobby service, the originator may pass on the title of the zine along with its function. This is then subject to the same principles as those for positions of responsibility. Where a post holder passes on a function but not an associated title, the continued possession of the title does not continue to confer any positions of responsibility, in and of itself.

DVCI/AJP

29-8.87

APPENDIX
(of the General Principles to the controversy over the position of the Miller Number Custodian)

1. Greg Costikyan was duly appointed to the MNC Custodianship in 1979. In 1990 he was solely responsible for the appointment of a successor. Since he failed to do this, it was correct for others (with the general consent of the hobby) to step-in and seek to persuade him to settle the matter whilst also providing an interim service. When in 1991, Greg then named a successor, the situation was resolved. Since Greg fulfilled his responsibility in this matter, no other person had any final say in the matter except himself. Subsequently, Lee Kendler Sr and Fred Hyatt were also appointed in the proper manner as outlined. In addition to this, they were accepted as being the legitimate post holders by the bulk of the variant hobby and thus carried out their function with the necessary consent.
2. When, in 1985, Robert Sacks declared the position of Miller Number Custodian vacant, he was thus acting without the authority of the current post holder and, without the consent of other interested parties and the wider variant hobby. In claiming to "appoint" Karel Alleric and subsequently Julie Martin to the position, he was similarly acting beyond his powers and without consent. Thus, his actions and decisions were 'ultra vires'. In addition he has sought to impose and uphold a so called 'Covenant', governing the running of the Miller Number Custodianship and prescribing the arrangements for passing on this position. Such a Covenant is invalid and thus void. In seeking to impose such a covenant, Mr Sacks was once again acting beyond his powers, in disregard of the wider hobby and his actions were again 'ultra vires'.
3. There is no place for any persons in the postal hobby acting in a position of responsibility under a pseudonym, since any such person (and their associates) are guilty of deception. Robert Sacks has continued to pursue his claims about the custodianship. He has sent repeated, chaotic and offensive mailings to numerous third parties without any explanation, and has failed to do the courtesy of responding to any replies. These activities have been widely disruptive without good cause or just conclusion. By these actions he has brought himself, the MNCship and (most seriously) the variant hobby into disrepute.
4. So, it would seem from his many activities and statements, that Robert Sacks is no longer truly concerned with, or a part of the wider hobby, but has seceded from, and set-up a rival and conflicting organisation. To quote a recent copy of 'Known Game Opings' "This kind of misconduct has no place in the hobby".
5. Therefore, the only correct judgement on the matter must be that the position of Miller Number Custodian was long ago settled and case cannot be re-opened. Robert Sacks has no authority to act in this matter, and the legitimacy of all his other activities and assumed positions must also be called into serious question. If he fails to desist in his attempts to destabilise the postal hobby, he runs the risk of being declared 'persona non grata'.
6. Finally, if the disagreement continues over the form of Miller Numbers and the person responsible for their designation, then it may be necessary for Miller Numbers to be abandoned. Since there are no such problems outside of North America, it is the local responsibility of the hobby there to settle the matter. If this is not possible, a business meeting may have to be convened at WorldCon in 1988 to finally settle the matter at an international level.

DVCI/AJP

29-8.87

Whether we like it or not, the subject of hobby politics occasionally finds its way into our lives, despite our repeated attempts to avoid it. When this happens, our only recourse is to sweep it away with a literary broom, or some such similar object. Where does one find a "literary broom"? Why, in

the broom closet

What you all have just been treated to on the preceding two pages is a notice I received in the mail from a certain Andrew Poole, in his auspicious capacity as the spokesman for the "Diplomacy Variants Commission," or DIVACOM for those of you with an acronym fetish. Mr. Poole has taken it upon himself to arbitrate the duel to the death between Fred Davis and Robert Sacks on the matter of the Miller Number Custodianship. Thank God someone has — I was beginning to have my doubts.

Apparently, the entire matter is abundantly clear to Mr. Poole. Robert Sacks, in his grasping desire to manipulate the hobby-at-large, made the mistake of committing several actions which, it appears, were *ultra vires*. Mr. Poole has even taken the trouble of pointing this out *ad nauseam*. In fact, Mr. Poole has gone so far as to pass judgment on these actions *de jure*, even to threaten Sacks with the title of *persona non grata*. Andrew "welcome[s] any reasoned and reasonable comments," although he adds that "[the] conclusions listed seem to be the only proper ones in the circumstances." No, Mr. Poole is no Sophist.

My privileged peek into this matter comes courtesy of my position as "Assistant Custodian, North American Variant Bank," or so it says on the mailing list. I can only thank Andrew for his kindness in sharing this attempt at arbitration with me. God knows, I care.

It occurs to me however, that I am missing something. That is, I'm still not certain why someone from the august ranks of the British hobby has decided to saddle himself with the burden of straightening out the mess of North American hobby politics. Doing that is just

asking for trouble, especially in the case of Mr. Sacks — just look at Simon Billenness. However, I do acknowledge the international importance of this matter; otherwise we couldn't apply the "Internationally-accepted 'Common Law' of the hobby," could we?

The Miller Numbers are important, no doubt about it. After all, someone might actually try to rate all those variant games played over the ages, and those games preserved because of their Miller Numbers will help determine the "World Champion of Cline-9 Diplomacy." Imagine that.

In any case, you can count me in on this one. Perhaps Mr. Poole will go through with his threat to convene a meeting at Worldcon '88 to settle the matter at an "international level." If he does, I will make it a point to attend just so I can storm out of the meeting at an appropriate moment, shouting accusations of cover-up and deception on both sides. Boy, wouldn't that make my day....

I have followed the M N C Custodianship "feud" with something akin to amusement, although I don't know if I can really call it that. The one thing that puzzles me is Bob Sack's claim that Michael Hopcroft wrote him to warn him that Fred would make a scene at Origins regarding the MNC Custodianship. I can see Michael now, huddled in his apartment, with visions of a crazed Fred Davis charging into the Baltimore convention shouting "I'm going to kill you, Sacks, just like Bruce Wayne in the new Batman comics! You're dead shit!" Uh huh. Now that Michael is psychic, he can get a job predicting where the next terrorist hijacking will be. I'm also glad that Bob is considering "resorting to lawyers" regarding his last-place finish in the Runestone. Maybe Michael could go to law school and represent him in a few years. It's nice to know that Bob is so concerned with the important things in life. I don't know who Andrew Poole is, but I thought that the British had better things to do than intervene in American mental health cases. Of course, Mr. Poole must be one bored dude to go to the trouble. I would love to see the worldwide meeting at Worldcon on the subject. I think I'd go as the Yemeni delegation, since they'll probably not be represented otherwise—and who would be so rash as to suggest that Yemeni Diplomacy hobbyists don't have a right to be heard? Fred Davis is a crazed wacko.

Reality Check

I would like to call a reality check on the entire hobby. I've seen entirely too many examples of people taking themselves and their games way too seriously.

I would like to call a reality check on Gary "Mouth of the South" Coughlan. Gary has been whining every season in 1986N with two pages of press about how everyone in the game has been unfair to him. Gary, shut up. We don't care if Frank Easton didn't take you up on your offer of an alliance. It's just a game. Gary suggested last season that stupid people are the first to claim that "it's only a game." Think about that one, Gary. Gary, believe it or not, seems to take the Runestone Poll more seriously than Linsey. Gary is extremely upset and now refuses to answer Linsey's letters simply because Bruce made the mistake of rating Gary's folded zine. Gary, consider yourself the "featured artist" of Reality Check.

I would like to call a reality check on Conrad von Metzke, who spent so much money on his zine that he actually wiped out his childrens' trust fund, and then told everyone on his sub list about his personal problems in graphic, self-indulgent detail. He is easily able to afford to send everyone an original Bolivian stamp, yet can't seem to find the grocery money. Apparently, Conrad is so emotionally tied to the hobby that every letter he receives which contains any kind words whatsoever causes him to stop typing in order to get a handkerchief to wipe his eyes with.

I would like to call a reality check on Bob Sacks, who accuses a mild-mannered old man like Fred Davis of sending death threats to people. Come on Bob. Bob's terribly upset because he doesn't have a monopoly on giving numbers to games. It's good that little things don't bother Bob.

I would like to call down a reality check on Bruce Linsey, who has to put out 80 pages of analysis about a poll on game newsletters. Is there really a need for a "Hobby Health Index," or "Longevity Points," or hopelessly corny Carly Simon lyrics? Only to people who believe that all of this has a profound impact on the world. Bruce got terribly upset when someone asked his readers to make him lose in the poll. Bruce, if Dick wants to lose, who cares?

I would like to call down a major reality check on Robert Smith. Bob Smith mailed out a separate mailing of his subzine just so he could stroke his own ego over his winning of the "Rookie Subzine of the Year" Runestone award, complete with a front-page reproduction of the dime-store certificate he got. Bob, congratulations. Yes, thirty-nine people out of the millions in the United States decided that you have the eleventh-best package of five photocopied pages of game reports, out of a total of twenty-one contestants. I'm sure it's nice to be so widely acclaimed. Bob then went on to rave about how someone dared to give him a zero as a vote. Bruce Geryk, who also accepts Bob's "challenge" of a duel with pistols at thirty paces, brought to my attention the fact that he gave Bob this vote. Bruce then showed me a copy of Bob's subzine. Good call, Bruce.

I would like to call a reality check on Melinda Holley. Melinda, I am told, plays in something like seventy games. Melinda, don't you have anything better to do? Do you have time to cook, or are you reduced to ordering pizza every night while you write Dip letters?

I would like to call down a reality check on the WAP rule discussion. Everybody has flipped out because the rule "violates the integrity of Diplomacy." The integrity of a game. This means that someone might not get credit in the game ratings, because their game has been declared irregular. I think that representing all the armed forces of Europe with 22 pieces of plastic is irregular. Mark Berch, you win the prize for this one. Congratulations.

I would like to call a reality check on Dave Berk. "I don't care about much, but when it comes to games, I get pretty pissed." Glad to see you have your priorities straight, Dave.

I would like to call a general reality check on anyone who gets mad about folds. Someone who decides that living a real life is more important than running games should really have his head examined, huh guys? Publishers finally decide that spending all of their free time and disposable income on a newsletter isn't right, and subbers get pissed off. I can't believe that people actually write nasty letters demanding their \$5 or \$10 or whatever back from a publisher who might lose ten times that much each issue. If you can't afford the \$5 or \$10, you have no business spending what little money you have on postage -- get a real job instead.

I would like to call a reality check on anyone who is so hard up for a social life that once he receives one or two letters or a telephone call from a person, he considers him a "good friend." It's really weird to read about people who call others "friends" because they correspond about games, and then wonder what those "friends" look like because they've never met in person. It's nice to know a few letters can mean so much. Tell me, would you get married after a Federal Express delivery?

I would like to call a reality check in a big way on Michael Hopcroft. The first issue of his zine, after describing how he didn't have a job and that his college "didn't want him," proceeded to relate all his personal problems and failings, and then Michael topped this off by mailing it all to a bunch of people he didn't know. Glad to see that your life is an open book, Michael. Michael has stated on several occasions that he "lives for the mail." Michael, if your life comes to you only through a little metal box, do yourself a favor and don't admit it to anyone.

If the postal hobby were to disappear tomorrow, and the quality of your life would drop significantly, you are a freak.

Now that I've thoroughly offended everyone who takes the hobby too seriously, anyone who cares to have some fun might like to get my subzine to *Random Thought*. I run *United*. Steve Clark, 5425 S Woodlawn #3B, Chicago, IL 60637. (Reality Check gets the *Bad Boys of Dip* seal of approval.)

BAAAAAAD MEDICINE

The preceding has been a public service announcement from the Bad Boys of Dip.

Actually, "Reality Check" is the doing of one particular Bad Boy: namely, Steve Clark. It first appeared in Jeff Zarse's *Random Thought*, and is being reprinted here at Steve's request. Steve also sent along copies to various publishers, but of all those, only Alan Stewart (*Praxis*), to my knowledge, has published it. Other publishers, while agreeing "privately" with the sentiments expressed, demurred when asked to print it because they felt it was "too harsh". This interests me, because I have a feeling that "too harsh" is being used as a euphemism for "telling the truth". My comments here, then, are made in direct response to Alan, who was the only one who would put his views on paper. Bravo, Alan. Glad to see we can always count on you for controversy.

The basic thrust of Alan's response is that while it is easy to be drawn into the hobby over one's head, there really isn't anything better to do, so why not? As alternatives to hobby involvement, Alan lists "watching television or sewing or drinking or doing nothing in particular or talking to boring people whom you have nothing in common with anyway or drinking" (note that "drinking" appears twice). Alan claims that people in this situation "have lost nothing and have nothing to be embarrassed about". As far as I'm concerned, if the best thing you can find to do with your life is play Dip, you have lost plenty and had better be embarrassed. It appears that Alan has a bit of a problem filling his leisure time. I question his assumption that

because this is the situation with him, it is normal.

I admit that while at a university, it is much easier to find people with whom you have something in common, and companionship is easier to come by on those lonely nights when the world has deserted you and you just can't decide whether to stab England or vote in the latest Peeripoll. Unfortunately, it appears that too many hobbyists have found that once in the "real world", friends with whom they have something in common aren't that easy to find. This doesn't have to be the case. If you have a job where the intellectual demands require that you have educated and intelligent people working with you (such as being on a university faculty), I think that finding companionship shouldn't be all that difficult. Of course, if you work for the post office, you'll have a harder time. But, then again, that's your fault, isn't it?

Alan uses this as an excuse for considering hobby acquaintances "good friends", although he rightfully ridicules those who take any correspondence at all as a sign of a significant relationship. While "pen pals" might be considered "friends" in some sense of the word, it defies human nature to use them as substitutes for face-to-face relationships. According to Alan, "many of your current friends will be dispersed all over the country, you will be consumed timewise with family and career, and will regard as 'good friends' many people with whom you correspond much less (if at all) than you will with your friends met through postal *Diplomacy*." I assume that Alan is referring to friends met in college or high school.

Unfortunately, Alan's parallel does not work for me because I don't believe that people are meant to experience life through little envelopes. Friendships are built on mutual experience, and the friends one meets in college will already have shared life with you to a significant degree *in person*. The continuation of such a relationship by mail or telephone is simply a way of savoring that mutual experience, the time shared together. Letter-writing in this case is not to be construed as a substitute for the face-to-face relationship.

In order for the hobby to cause a "serious problem" in one's life (according to Mr. Stewart), it must cause one to give up one's chances at "writing a classic piece of literature or getting a job or becoming President of the United States". Which one of these three doesn't belong? If you guessed "getting a job", you're absolutely right! How about that sneaky Stewart character, thinking he can slip employment in between Pulitzer Prizes and presidential aspirations! While I think we can safely dispense with the hyperbole, the question of getting a job is not quite so easily dismissed. From what I have seen, quite a few hobbyists do not have jobs. I doubt, however, that their involvement in the hobby prevented them from getting jobs. Instead, I believe that too many hobbyists use the hobby as a personal crutch *because* certain aspects of their lives are not satisfactory. Alan cites as examples of "useless" activities such things as baseball magazines, football pre-game shows, and philatelic publications. To this I could add the Oprah Winfrey Show, television game shows, and *USA Today*. The difference is that the hobby seems to bring out a unique sense of intensity in its participants—an intensity that is far out of proportion to the intensity required to

"compete" in a game. I have a suspicion that this is a psychological device to help people cover up their real-life failings. This is something I cannot tolerate. Before you tell me that I should leave people alone and just ignore them, think about it: would you like to work for a company that had a reputation for hiring freaks? Although the situations may not be the same, they are similar. One can be judged by the company one keeps, and the fact that a lot of gamers are weirdos doesn't help matters. The fact that, generally, successful people do not participate in the hobby may be another indicator here.

I could go on and on, but I won't. One interesting aspect of Soviet political thought and writing is that specific problems of the society can be criticised, as long as that criticism is not generalised to criticise the Soviet system as a whole. The difference may be semantic, but it exists. What I have just done here is engage in a lot of generalisation about the hobby. It'll be interesting to see how much of "Reality Check", acceptable as it was in the form of specific criticism, will be unpalatable when generally applied.

So tell me, are you tired of hearing about how Conrad von Metzke's kids went camping, went to the zoo, or drew impressionistic portraits of street mimes? Would you rather resort to having to read *Penguin Dip* than struggle through one more Randolph Smyth "strategy" article? Good. Take a step, then, if just for a brief moment, into the tormented existence of one particular Bad Boy. Small children and Boardman Number Custodians not admitted. Please be advised that no one affiliated with this zeen would ever suggest that anyone in the hobby should buy and use illegal drugs. Absolutely no one. Not us.

A Strange and Savage New Year's Odyssey

Steven Clark

(I was home for the holidays last year in my native state, which is either Ohio or insanity. What you will read in the following pages is The Plan, and then The Reality of that New Year's Eve. I have allowed Bruce to publish this because I plan to never run for public office. It is all true.)

The foundation for this terrible ordeal was laid when the thought formed in my head to have more fun in one evening than man should be allowed. This was my terrible sin; the price had to be paid.

The Plan called for me to first meet Gus at Tommy's, where he almost always is when he eats lupos. According to The Plan, I would arrive half an hour after Gus; this would have allowed him time to buy the ludes and, knowing Gus, he would have eaten two already. Gus, since he would be getting sloppy, would easily be convinced to go north. I, swallowing two killers, would immediately motive us north. I would pull up at Matt's just seconds before the primitive barbituates would begin to wreak havoc on my nervous system. Nick and Jeff, who had been contacted earlier, would be arriving at the same time. Inside would be a brutal jungle gone berserk. A dozen chest-beating Neanderthals would be aggressively arrayed around a scarred, beer-soaked table, playing Quarters. I would first express a loud, guttural greeting to a huge black man seated with the Tribunal. Matt, who is somehow both civilised and barbaric, would smile and say something coherent, because the game is just underway and no one is really drunk. Of course, I wouldn't hear it over the din, but that would be of no consequence. I would join in the slaughter, consuming an ugly amount of Kamchatka vodka. Gus would fit right in; he often associates with Neanderthals. The next few hours would be an incredible spiral of alcohol and violence. But, before midnight, I would get a ride to Diane's party. She would be intoxicated already and an intensely sensual session would follow.

That was The Plan, and the extent of its ambitious nature was my downfall. No man should be able to be with most of his friends, enjoy his favorite drugs, and get carnal on New Year's Eve. Things went savage like this:

When I got to Tommy's, I knew things were wrong when Gus answered the door and he looked more tired than sloppy. There was a reason. There's always a reason. No ludes. Gus, like any true addict, was uptight after the expected delivery of oblivion failed to arrive. I was seated on a couch next to Gus, and across the room were Mr. & Mrs. Sloppy and George, a man who makes thousands selling coke and loses it all gambling.

"Dr. Clark, get the vodka out of your car and make yourself a drink." *Not part of The Plan.*

"I was thinkin' about going to a party in Worthington."

"*Worthington?* I don't want to go all the way up there."

Mrs. Sloppy interrupts, "Gus just needs his lupos." *She's right.* I was kind of glad that the killers hadn't arrived; Gus is unmanageable if he is depressed when he gets sloppy.

I got up to make some calls. I hadn't been able to get a hold of Jeff or Nick before I left. Nick wasn't home, nor was Jeff. *Shit.* I did get a hold of Matt, "Steve, you coming over? Isra's here." *Skizzy.* I hadn't seen the Mad Thai for months. I told Matt I was on my way.

"I don't know, Steve. I was just going to sit around and drink a few beers with Mr. and Mrs. Sloppy."

Well, Gus, I'm going. You can come with me or not." Gus decided to stay.

Outside, as I was walking to my car, Gus said, "I'm sorry I pissed you off."

"Gus, you pissed me off twice in two trips. I can't imagine how you could have done any worse." With that I slammed the door and peeled out. *Motherfucker!* The man had been my soulmate and best buddy for my last year in college, and for the three weeks I had been in town, he had spared me four hours. *I'm sick of this bullshit. When I get about four vodka&7's into me, I'm going to call him.*

"Hello?"

"May I speak to Gus?"

"Just a second."

"Yeah?"

"Gus, you're a piece of shit, and you'll never be more than spit on the ground." Click.

I spent the drive north working on the exact wording, playing with different variations, and deciding on the above.

When I got to Matt's, I noticed many cars already there. *Game must be in full swing.* I got the grocery bag with vodka, 7-Up, ice, and two limes inside it out of the trunk. *Beware Jews bearing gifts.* I was pissed and ready for madness. It was 9:30.

Inside, things were basically as I had expected. We were two short of the dozen brutes, but ten 200-plus pounders is enough. Matt was seated at the gaming table with his back to the corner as usual. Some half-catatonic woman was draped over him. She looked like she had *at best* twenty minutes before she started getting sick and becoming a serious liability. *I hope whoever dragged her here insures she gets sick somewhere where I don't have to see it.* I was in the kitchen making a hefty v&7 when Isra greeted me. "Yeah, they're playing some mindless and primordial drinking game." A feral grin appeared on my face. "I know. I'm joining them."

I seated myself on a desk next to Matt's chair, and greeted by glance those around me the table that I knew. The game was much more confrontational than usual and there was much less game-involved drinking. *Fuck it, I'll just chug my drinks; I'm losing time.* One of the guys kept urging us to go to this party on campus. "This is the last case we'll open. When it's gone, we head out."

As soon as that case was empty, another was opened. As soon as they needed more beer, it would be, "Isra, drinks!" "Hurry up, Mr. Taiwan!" *He's from Thailand, you mentally-defective bat.* Of course, Isra would get the beers. *Skizzy would never make it as a Neanderthal. Could that be why they're extinct?*

I soon lost interest, mainly due to one large jerk whom I was finding increasingly difficult to ignore. So I went over to drink in peace and talk to Isra. As Matt joined us, I watched Dan say for the third time, "Okay, this is the last case." This time, he was right.

This fits perfectly in The Plan. When Isra leaves for this party, I'll ask him to drop me off at Diane's. The timing was right. It was edging past eleven, and I wanted to show up at Diane's before 11:30.

I downed the drink I had just made, and poured myself another so that I would be ready to leave. A few minutes later, I piled into Isra's car with Matt and the jerk. I had made sure to bring my mixins.

It took just ten minutes to drive there, but my brain was getting quite clouded at that point and I picked the wrong house. I should never have gotten out of the car. I should have gone to campus and seen a man thrown out a second-story window. I had no knowledge of what was to befall, so I staggered out and set the dark wheels in motion.

Isra squealed away as I stared in confusion at the house I was standing in front of. It didn't take me long to recover, though, and I quickly found the right house. I walked up the driveway with my camera over my shoulder, a drink in one hand, and a grocery bag with 7-Up, ice, and what was left of the vodka in the other. *Beware Jews bearing gifts.*

I went to the door and rang the doorbell. Damn quiet for a party.

Diane came to the door, dressed in what looked like a bathrobe, and looked at me with some surprise. "Steve ... I forgot to tell you ... I cancelled the party."

I stood there in numbed disbelief as she invited me in. I put my baggage on the kitchen table and followed her into the family room. There, watching Channel 4 News, were her father (who, although I had been there many times, I had never met), and brother. *What a goofy-looking man,* I thought as I tried to shake his hand and slurred some greeting. We sat in dumb silence as we watched the WCMH luminaries discussing New Year's Eve. *Mona, you quivering BITCH! And Doug, your fucking entrails should be ripped out and sliced up before your eyes!* I always have thoughts like this when watching the worst news team in America. I started laughing uncontrollably as I saw Jim the Weatherman slur his words in a drunken

stupor as he reported the action at the Hyatt. The Family looked at me with a mixture of fear and loathing, and I knew it was time for an exit. Diane gave me a kiss at the door and told me how sorry she was for not telling me about the cancellation, but I wasn't paying much attention. It was 11:30.

I was trying to figure out how to salvage the evening. *The easiest thing would be to walk the five blocks home and show up roaring drunk at my Mom's party. Boring and out of the question. I got it! Walk back to Matt's and drive down to the campus party.* I hadn't considered how I would be able to operate a car when I was having trouble walking, but it was a moot point. I had a new Quest.

Gotta get rid of this bag. Too heavy for a Quest. I walked down two houses and hurled the bag on the front lawn. I downed the last of my drink, but kept the plastic Ohio State glass. I repositioned the camera over my shoulder. On my way.

The shortest path between two points is a straight line, so the fastest way to High Street is to beeline through those houses. I headed out at an angle to the streets, cutting through as many yards as possible. I had misjudged where I was and soon became completely lost.

I crossed the backyard of this extremely large house, and saw another mansion nestled amongst the trees across the way. As I became drunker from the absorption of alcohol from my earlier drinks, I started to get violent thoughts. Goddamn rich bastards live in their fucking mansions. They should die like PIGS! I considered stealing something from the open garage, but decided instead on some destruction. With a couple good heaves, I knocked over a section of fence. Feeling pleased and ready for more of this new-found pastime, I moved on to find other houses to vandalize. *These giddy bastards deserve everything I'm giving them!* I was ready.

But I wasn't really pissed off until I walked through the backyard. There, behind my first victim's house, a large section of wooded area had just been leveled and a new lane with lowered curbs for the expected driveways had been paved through the center of destruction. ***Greedy fucking bastards! Tearing up the woods for a couple of bucks! Giddy motherfuckers!*** There were several realtors' signs selling the lots. I went for these first. I rocked one back and forth until I pulled it out of the ground. I then grabbed it in two hands and spun in circles, like some crazed discus-thrower on speed, gaining momentum. I then released it, sending it flying far.

After the first one, I headed for the only trees left standing, in a small ravine with the tiniest stream left at the bottom. I slid/stumbled down the leaf-covered ground to the stream. I then noticed a dozen or so Busch beer cans, and started throwing them up towards the road. Between my poor footing and my drunken state, most of them fell short. I tried to climb back up to finish the job, but by this time my blood alcohol level had peaked, and I could get no further than halfway before I tumbled back. After several attempts, I resigned myself to staying at the bottom of the ravine until some coordination returned. It was 11:55.

While I was lying next to the creek, I contemplated life and appreciated the beauty of the surrounding plant life. I took a few pictures of the nearby trees. At about that time it became 1987. It was heralded by the sound of relentless explosives, horns, sirens, screams, and other instruments of noise pollution. I curled up in a ball, as I felt this endless profusion of tortuous noise to be a personal attack upon myself. I decided that when the noise ended I would be able to move on. The celebration went on for about twenty minutes as I lay in mental anguish waiting for it to stop.

Finally, it ceased, and I made it up to the street in only two attempts. After clearing the beer cans that hadn't made it all the way, I went to finish my main job. I walked up the street, repeating my discus-throwing act on all the realtors' signs. I also ripped up with a vengeance all the surveyors' sticks. I then went over to one of the several plastic "boxes" embedded in the ground and started kicking it viciously. I was starting to make some progress towards detaching it from the ground when I noticed that the word "Danger" was printed on the side. I fell clumsily to the ground to get a better look. I was having trouble focusing my vision, but did see the word "electricity" and knew I had met my match. I got up knowing I was finished with this street, and feeling very pleased with my new role as defender of some nebulous, anti-establishment cause.

I was quickly up at a real street and looked around to find out where I was. The new street was Northland. I had never heard of it, but there was a shopping center by that name about ten miles away. *Northland?? I can't be near the shopping center. Oh well, no choice but to trudge on.* I soon saw to the right a street-to-be just like the one I had recently denuded of signs. Not to leave a job half-done, I went to work there, and when I finished I found a third. When I was satisfied that my duty had been completely discharged, I noticed that across Northland was Wilson Hills Elementary School. *Didn't Matt go to Wilson Hills? Yeah, I think he did. That means I must be near Matt's.* With this to encourage me, I moved on with renewed hope.

Of course, I was still entirely clueless as to where I was, but I moved along Northland hoping to find some street I knew. As I staggered along, I began to feel somewhat nauseated. The next several streets I knew not, and my upset stomach decided that I would be better off with hiccups of a particularly nasty sort. I tried everything I knew to stop them, especially the one where holding one's breath is key. After no success with suffocation, I decided I should eat something. The only thing around was grass, so I reached down and started chewing on it as I walked. *Wait—I'm eating grass! Why the hell am I doing this?* With that thought I spat the grass out, only to have my hiccups continue with renewed intensity. I went to the last resort: standing on my head. I fell to the ground, and couldn't seem to get my body to invert itself. So I lay there in a complete stupor and suddenly noticed I was a couple of feet from a sign. *Pittsfield! I know that street.* Actually, although I had heard of Pittsfield, I had no idea where it was. But being in even vaguely-familiar territory raised my morale considerably.

As I was noticing the sign, a car that had just passed by was backing up towards me. A window rolled down and someone called out, "You seem to have fallen down. Do you need any help?"

"Yeah, I had fallen down, but see, now I'm getting up. I'm okay." With that I started walking along Pittsfield. The direction didn't matter because I was lost. My little *tête-à-tête* with the mystery driver had cleared my hiccups somehow. As I walked along, I did not notice any streets I recognized until I came to a T-junction at the end of the street. When I saw the sign for Proprietors Road I knew I had been walking in the wrong direction. But I wasn't about to move my tortured body back into the Land of Unknown Streets, so I moved out onto Proprietors and soon recognized North Street. Now I was home free; I mean I was still miles from home, much farther away than I had been when I started out, but I knew exactly where I was. I didn't even think of heading for Matt's. I had paid the terrible price; I was defeated and forgiven, or so I thought.

As I moved down North, I noticed that my camera had lost grip of its flash unit somewhere and left it behind. I was not about to return to the Jaws of Hell to look for it—that's what mornings are for. I was also starting to feel the cold for which I was poorly dressed. I pulled my sweatshirt hood over my bowed head and thrust my hands deep into my pockets and marched on like a good little soldier. My thoughts turned to shimmering glasses of water of which my parched throat desired to partake.

I walked along, keeping myself well-behaved as I underwent an ugly mood swing to deep exhaustion. All was well, and I was making good progress home, until the navigator in me—an ugly, ignorant bastard—decided that time would be saved by cutting through the Methodist Children's Home. This was an area of great mystery to me as a child. I had always thought that a Children's Home should have children in it, but never once in the eleven years I had lived in Worthington had I seen any children in or amongst the buildings. I used to imagine terrible, sick, demented scenarios to explain why no children were ever seen outside. Most of the involved serious amounts of physical torture.

As I walked near one of the buildings, I felt that this was as good a time as any to discover if any of those waking nightmares were indeed true. I subsequently went around to all the windows, especially those to the basement, looking for any signs of life (or torture). The first building I inspected seemed deserted. The second appeared to be furnished for a simple family. I can't remember what the other buildings were like. Maybe those sadistic bastards blanked my mind; I'll never know.

When I came out of the Home area, I was convinced that I had come out on Hayhurst, which of course was wrong. I went back to my original beeline strategy and this was a complete mistake. The people in this area of Worthington place great value in Fences. Most of the houses had restrictive fences strung around their entire backyards, and often one fence was built right up against a neighbor's. *Wouldn't want that fence gap to make you look like you have no balls, would you now? You motherfucker.* But they weren't about to disappear simply because I disapproved of them, so I put myself into an acrobatic mindset. This might have worked had I even been partially sober; they weren't too high. But after getting a good running start and getting a good hand placement on the fence, I couldn't seem to get the elevation necessary to clear it. After a couple of gut-wrenching falls on either the fence or my ass, I decided on a less elegant but eminently safer method. With two hands placed securely on the fence, I would lift my right foot slowly up onto to fence in a quasi-stable fashion. With this base I would attempt to heave myself over the fence without catching my leg or groin painfully on my enemy, the barrier. This was relatively successful, seeing as the worst I could do if I kept my arms stiff was to fall slowly back on my ass or slowly forward with a roll onto my back. There was a lot of falling back, but about every third attempt saw me over a fence.

Thusly I slowly beelined my way across the yards. As I went over what would be my last fence, some small piece of shit passing as a dog next door started yelping as if it were used to intimidating strangers. If there's one thing I hate more than a barking dog, it's a barking dog that doesn't measure past my shin. As I walked by the fence it was safely behind, it increased the intensity of its challenge, so I viciously kicked the fence; this usually works. But no, the goddamn dog just got louder. *That's it, you goddamn sad excuse for a canine. Your ass is mine!* With that I actually jumped over the fence, just to have the mongrel grab my fucking leg. Well, that was it. I swung my hand back over my head and brought it down with frightful speed upside the dog's head. Then I pushed it further away with my foot and made a quite ungraceful exit as the dog whimpered away.

Sated with dog-beating for the day, I decided to stick to the roads and skip the fence-hopping bullshit. As I cut behind the elementary school two blocks from home, I saw what I hadn't noticed since my days at this school. There it was—my *Nemesis*. A dome constructed of ungiving steel bars set at bizarre angles with none parallel to the ground or each other. A design only someone truly demented could have proposed for children to play on. My Nemesis had brutally defeated me as a child, dealing out pain as if it were in demand. I had been made to surrender, and had stayed away ever since. But now I was to take command. I approached it with dread, and placed my hands on two skewed bars to begin the climb. As I ascended its eight-foot height with my sense of equilibrium screwed, I focused all my concentration on not falling. When I topped the beast and reversed myself for the descent, I knew I had won.

I ran the last block home, but my keys had been lost in some pole-vaulting attempt. As the door was opened I was queried, "Steve, are you drunk?"

I just laughed and screamed at the same time as I went upstairs to oblivion.

*(Thanks for sharing your embarrassing moments with us, Steve. Of course, Michael Hopcroft is an expert at this. Somehow, though, you just don't make it to his level. Maybe it's because this doesn't happen to you very often, and you don't whine about it self-piteously over and over in ten different zines over a period of twenty-six months. Maybe someday, right? Steve would normally get free issue for this, but since such a reward is not possible, I suppose this article is good for a pizza and beer, to be redeemed at the next con which we attend. Alternately, he can trade this in for a ten-issue sub to **Not up to Modern Graphics Standards**, inflicted upon the person of his choice. Take your pick, Steve. Would you rather mess up yourself, or somebody else?)*

A RETURN TO NEWFANE

Or, "What fun is a con if we can't torment Gary Coughian?"

[Right. I'll try to do better with this con report since it was more recent. No promises, though.]

The idea of a visit to Tomatocon was plotted concurrently with the Wichita scam. Unfortunately, Bad Boy Clark counted himself out from the beginning because the week following the con were his prelims (exams generally taken after the first year of coursework for the PhD, for you non-academic types). Jeff and I, being obnoxious undergrads, didn't have to worry about these things. The original plan was that I would go with Jeff to Hanover after the con for a few days of drunken stupor, even though Mr. Ivy League hadn't even registered for classes or gotten a room assignment. Not that he cared.

As usual, I procrastinated in making flight reservations to the point where the airline fare was more than I felt justified in spending on a con. Instead, I took Amtrak. This meant, of course, that I would have to spend seventeen hours or so one way, but since I put up with it last year, I figured I could do it again.

Unfortunately, the train to Albany only ran at one time, and that time put me in Renssalaer (across the river from Albany) at ten in the morning. As circumstances dictated, Bruce Linsey could only pick me up at four-thirty in the afternoon, so I had to entertain myself for six and a half hours. Not being used to this sort of boredom, I brought a book, my Walkman, and lots of tapes. After getting to Renssalaer and realizing this was inadequate entertainment, I decided to brave the rain and walk over to Albany to pick up the new R.E.M. album, *Document* (which I had meant to buy in Chicago before I left but couldn't because I would have missed the train). Well, surprise! Downtown Albany is devoid of

record stores, although it has enough fast food places to make even Steven Clark gag. (Actually, Bruce Linsey informed later that Albany has "a great record store called 'The Blue Moon' which has all the Simon & Garfunkel albums you'd ever want," but I had left my barf bag in the train.)

When I returned to the train station, I placed myself where I would have a direct view of the entrance, and proceeded to read. When I looked up about half an hour later, I observed a vaguely Linsey-like person walking around and around the station, finally going up to the ticket counter. I donned my shades, walked up behind him, and asked him whether or not he'd be interested in purchasing any controlled substances. We left for the airport shortly thereafter.

At the airport we got Steve Hutton, along with Linda and Steve Courtemanche. Steve Hutton had flown in on something called Mall Airlines, so we laughed at him.

On the way up to Paul's, we made the mistake of stopping for dinner at a pizza place, the name of which I have mercifully forgotten. It took them over an hour and a half to serve us a pizza, by which time we just wanted to get to Newfane before the con ended. I did get the chance (thanks to Steve Hutton) to learn how to play Wheel of Fortune, which I had never seen before.

When we arrived at Paul's, I immediately checked to see if anyone important had arrived. Seeing only Burgess and Stewart (well, I saw Burgess, but I didn't know who he was until Zarse introduced him), I made my way into the living room where (after several high-fives) Jeff was seated at (guess what) a *Titan* board. Of course, he was winning. In fact, Jeff won a lot of games that weekend. So did I. It was so bad that in every game in which Jeff and I

played together, one of us won. Makes you appreciate the level of competition at Pudgecon.

Once again, I don't remember too many things about the con, so I'll just write what comes to mind. Flannel shirts. I have never seen so many people wearing flannel shirts in my life. Guys, if you can't afford real clothes, don't advertise it.

Civilization. A lot of *Civ* games got played (well, three, but that's a lot), none of which I won. This can be attributed to one of two factors. Either it was because I sat next to Greg Ellsworth, who apparently hadn't washed in the three few weeks, or it was because Zarse sat next to me and coached me. He got his, though, when a particularly forceful high-five propelled him backwards in his chair, which promptly broke in half. Jeff carried the remains upstairs to show Paul.

Power Barons. What a stupid game. Perhaps if you lived in Albany or Dalton or somewhere and didn't have any friends and were bored for nine-tenths of your life because *The Cream Shall Rise* only comes out once a year, you might like this game. Otherwise, forget it.

Tiddleywinks. Super. Some serious wrist action involved. Light on strategy, but heavy on excitement.

Pickles. No pickles this year. Too bad. Of course, Gary Coughlan didn't show up, so there wasn't anybody to throw them at. Steve Hutton spent one entire evening relating 1001 uses for pickles to Jeff. Jeff showed him his Smugpuff cheer.

Alan Wells. This joker is even worse at *Titan* than Barno. Stay away from him—he wears overalls.

Jim McMahon. Not at the con. Guess he's one of the Byrne crowd.

Elmer Hinton. Not at the con, but could easily have been if Jeff and I had carried out our plan to drive out to Nashua. The plan was to harrass Elmer so much that he would chase us back to Newfane, where Paul Gardner and Simon Billenness would ambush him with

copies of *Supernova*. Fell through because Jeff passed out after a few too many Carlsbergs, courtesy of Jim McCarthy. Speaking of Jim, don't ever play one of Jim's games with him unless you're prepared to lose. He spent the whole weekend telling people how great *Shogun* (the game, not the book) is, and relating his views on strategy, tactics, and life according to Milton Bradley. When he finally convinced enough people to play that they started a game, they beat him silly. Subsequently, he whined about how they had abused and perverted the "spirit of the game." Yeah. Maybe he should play a few more nine-player solitaire *Empire Builder* games with Bruce Linsey.

Freaks. Loads of freaks at the con. They know who they are. Trust me.

In case you didn't know, the official Bad Boys motto is "We are the future." Jeff suggested changing it to "We have a future," but decided that it was too obvious.

Filling space really blows chunks, y'know? Let's see, what can I talk about? Oh, yes the Bad Boys raod trip. Sometime next summer, Jeff, Steve, and I plan to make it out to the West Coast in order to pay visits to all of those West Coast hobby notables. These greats include BoB O'Donnell, Michael Hopcroft, Kevin Tighe, Larry Peery, Conrad von Metzke, Rod Walker, and Pete Gaughan. What? Pete isn't Californian? Oh, but he claims he is. Seems that Pete doesn't like people to associate him with Texas. Makes him break out. Instead, he wants an image as a "hip California dude," to quote Matt Fleming. I guess that's why he bought the fishing hat. According to him, everyone in California wears fishing hats.

the courier

As an experiment, this issue will have a lot fewer letters, because most people who write in are illiterate. If your letter doesn't see print here (which is more likely than not), don't worry — you have a better chance of seeing it in a Chicago trash dump. If not, well, my cat is really into shredding things, and....

+++++

Pete Gaughan

Your quote has me mystified. Is it a translation, or a work in English?

[English? What's English? Actually, it was a selection from Mikhail Sholokhov's And Quiet Flows the Don. Such a fun book. Really.]

The "phrasing and digression" of Steve Heinowski's letter seem typical of him (what little I know). Steve seems to rely on stream-of-consciousness when corresponding. If he seems hounded, it's because he is, but that doesn't reduce my trust in his ability to handle the office.

[So you place your trust in a hounded person who writes like a ninth-grader. Of course, then again, you trust your wife, who calls me in the middle of the night.]

You have an astute eye for publisher's hype, but be careful. Jumping to the conclusion that "literature" can be defined so as to exclude Joan Didion is like Reaganauts defining "patriot" so as to exclude Democrats. A matter of taste, not definition.

[Yes—a question of good taste and poor taste. But then again, the Democrats aren't patriots—they're spineless.]

Hey, how about a little credit to Rich Miller and myself for the data on We? (I'm looking for a copy to buy; all I've seen is library editions.)

[What do you mean, "credit"? Are you referring to my comments to Jack McHugh? If so, I don't understand. I read the book, and told him about it. I could have told you all the stuff you added to my comments in Pere. You just didn't ask.]

The history presented in the lettercol and your article fills in many details I never

knew. Thanks! And I'm impressed by your summer readlist.

[The only problem with my starting the series is that Zarse is never going to let me hear the end of it. Of course, if it gets too bad, I can always fake him again.]

John Schlosser

It was really great to finally meet you [at Tomatocon]. I have to admit that you weren't at all like you sounded over the phone (let's just say I was pleasantly surprised). I had a great time at BRUXCON. It had great games, great fun, and great people.

[No doubt. I am, however, a bit concerned that so many people have this skewed impression of what I'm like. I'm sure you can attest to the fact that "nerd" is one of the last words that would describe me. Of course, I never imagined that Jim-Bob would describe me as "obnoxious".]

[Speaking of that telephone conversation we had last spring, I should tell you about the circumstances surrounding it. I had just stayed up for over forty straight hours, topping it off with two finals. I had just dropped onto my bed for what I expected to be an extended period of unconsciousness when the phone rang. At least, that's what I thought. Apparently, though, when I talked to you I had already been asleep for six hours, never mind the fact that it seemed like I had just dropped off. During my sleep (and before your call), I had also received a call from Jeff Zarse. Jeff claims that he and I talked for a while, although to this day I remember neither the phone call nor the conversation. He says that I sounded like I was doped to the sky. You must have gotten the tail end of that.]

I'm glad to see that you are back to publishing **BI**. It truly is a top-notch zine. I especially liked your article on DIPCON. I hope you decide to do one on BRUXCON. [See this issue.] By the way, if you need any standbys, just let me know. I'm willing to stand by for any Dip game.

[I'm glad that you didn't spell "standbys" with an "-ies" at the end. That's a mistake with which Jim-Bob, for all his alleged education (and I say "alleged" because he got it at Brown), continues to irritate me. Hey, Jim-Bob, SPY ON THIS!]

Once again, it was a pleasure to meet you, and I hope that we will have the opportunity to meet and talk again. Keep up the good job with **BI**.

Linda Courtemanche

I am VERY glad to see you back on track with your publishing schedule! Now that you're back with us, I hope we keep getting to hear from you, even if you do pull back to those twenty-page issues you were talking about #4. Long or short, *BI* is an extraordinary zine—I missed it! Congrats on your Runestone finish.

[Right. It means soooooo much to me. By the way, since you thought it was worthwhile, I'm assuming that you don't want your sub money back. This is the kind of mutual adulation that continually goes on in High Inertia. So—what did you do on your "typical day"?]

It was great seeing you at Brux/Tomatocon! For the second year in a row, it was a fantastic time, although I could have done without that fog on the car ride up.... Hope to see you at another con soon!

[Fred Davis is a crazed wacko.]

It has been quite a con-year for me and Steve (although I'm not sure if we quite beat out the "bad boys of Dip"!). *[Impossible—and I think those should be capital "b"s.]* In May we drove up to Fred Hyatt's house for a con, and then Brux and Simon were down at our apartment with Simon's brother the same month. In August we went to Lee Kendter's for some gaming (Brux, Paul, and Mike Barno were there, too), and of course there was Newfane, which just got hit a couple of weeks ago with a foot or two of snow in a record storm. Did you hear about that?

[Yes, I did, although I've never seen snow before, so this is obviously a great thing to write to me about because I'm so interested.]

Miscellaneous comments: I really enjoyed reading the *Random Thought* fake at the con, and I also loved your Dipcon review in *BI*!

[So you got a look at the fake, eh? More mutual adulation. Thankyou thankyou thankyou thankyou. Steve and I whipped the whole thing off in an afternoon. In many ways, it was the piece of hobby material I enjoyed writing the most (except for the slams in this issue). It also shows you that anything Zarse can write, Clark and I can write better in one-tenth the time.]

It's good to see that the WAP ruling has been handed down—or should I say, "up"? And after all of the print space that has been devoted to the issue, before I leave it I will only add a couple of words in defense of Steve Heinowski's comments, some of

which you said were "petty and childish". I suspect what you are referring to is Steve's disclaimer about not wanting to start hobby feuds with his decision. Although I can't be sure, I think Steve is venting much of the same frustration I have felt about hobbyists who can completely obliterate from their minds that Dip is supposed to be a hobby! *[See "Reality Check".]* We both know how many endless arguments have gone on in this hobby about matters which were (in the scheme of things) trivial, and which can never be resolved no matter how much jawing and scribbling goes on about them. I have met Steve, and my impression of him is not of someone who makes "petty and childish" decisions; it is of someone who can't stand seeing people at one another's throats. I feel the same way.

[Then is your impression of Steve one of a person who has mastered basic writing skills? Shift into reality mode, babe. I can't sympathize with people who are worried about a BNC coup d'etat. I mean, does he go to work every day wondering whether he'll still be the BNC when he comes home? Does it keep him up at night? Perhaps if you explained why it matters so much, I might understand.]

This is the first day in many, many weeks which I have had all to myself, with no commitments other than the ones I choose to make for myself. I can't even tell you how good that feels! I have spent the entire day writing letters, snoozing, and gabbing with friends on the phone.

[So, how's the razor shopping going?]

Jacques-Henri Strauss

I have read about your 'zine *Blunt Instruments* in the Dutch 'zine *Oxymoron* published by Jaap Jacobs. According to what he says, your 'zine is both a very good one and a bargain.

Now, Jaap tells his readership something about yourself; so I think you might be interested to learn something about me. I'm 24, I've been playing *Diplomacy* for quite a number of years. I receive quite a few 'zines: *DW* from the US, *XL* from Canada, and *PeD* of Switzerland to name a few, and am currently playing in four international games and a few variants. Besides, I ended college three years ago, founded my own consulting firm, and still spend a lot of time computing and playing for fun and so many more activities I won't dare count! Alas, I'm still not the English speaker I ought to be.

That's all, Bruce, I hope you'll enjoy having me subscribe to *BI*, and that I will be able to contribute some article in the future. By the way, I can't understand why you Americans are still using moves conditional on retreats and not the other way round—those orders are harder to write/decipher for both players and GMs *and* oppose the official rules.

Jeffrey M. Zarse

Word up. I decided that I should take the time to tell you how much I really enjoy receiving your zine *Blunt Instruments*. (Did you see how I did that?—I've got a Macintosh and I can use all kind of nutty fonts and style stuff, just like you!! Anyways, I'm getting sidetracked, please allow me to return to the topic at hand: inane praise for anything you do.) Bruce, I don't mind if you and your zine come out every six weeks or quarterly or whatever ... all I care about is that you publish this glorious journal dedicated to *Diplomacy* games, *United* games, WAP discussions, con reports, and life in the nuclear age. These are my five most important concerns in the whole wide world. Bless you, Bruce.

I like the exceptional quality of your printing, too. Do you get this photocopied at all, or is this some new computer thing of the 1980s — the decade we are in today? If so, could you do my Christmas Card list on this printer so I can have cool envelopes to put my letters in during the holiday season?

While I've got you on the line, we have the matter of your ruling in 1985AQ. Bruce, I can't help but feel your reasoning was flawed here and you should have allowed that support to hold as valid. I agree wholeheartedly with Rod Walker here.

By the way, I am also most interested in the use of the Polish language as a gimmick to get people to write for your zine. Most gimmicks I have considered for my zine *Random Thought* (not a plug), have been aimed at finding things in common with my readers. Yet you, Bruce, in that avante garde way of yours that I can only describe as avante garde, opted to find things that none of your subbers cared about and made it into a sideshow of sorts. Just what the hell does Cztery mean anyways and why not just call your zine "THE THING", huh? No wonder Fred Davis thinks I'm an asshole.

[Fred Davis is a crazed wacko.]

Finally, I want to tell you a little bit about myself since I consider myself to be about the average *BI* reader. I have no job

and am on welfare because my job working with computers or accounting fell through because my pocket protector clashed with the man who interviewed me. Sure, I went to college, but I don't think I want to tell you where. I like the game of *Diplomacy* very very much because it gives me a chance to meet interesting and fascinating people like you and Rory Noble. I enjoy all types of Baroque music, not just the Italian genre. I used to drink beer, but I stopped because my thighs broke out in hives. Oh, and I have a french poodle named Snoogums whom I love very very much.

[Damn those oysters—what?—oh. Glad to see you're on welfare—that should make Michael Hopcroft, Dave Anderson, and Gary Coughlan feel right at home. As the Bad Boys say, "Working at the Post Office is like being on welfare but having to get up in the morning." Right. As an aside, I'll just point out to you that while I do write about things most of my subscribers don't care about, you don't try to find things in common with your readers. Instead, you make fun of them in print (although they can't figure it out and think you're just kidding) and then call me on the phone to tell me how stupid Rory Noble is for living in Oregon and working for a lumber company, or how Bruce McIntyre is a complete loser for bragging about the fact that he got rehired at a gas station. In other words, you bait and ridicule them. Sort of like what I'm doing in this issue. The problem is that I should have done this a long time ago.]

Conrad von Metzke

For no particular reason except that it's current in my mind—I'd like to suggest a book to you: *The Last Hapsburg*, by Gordon Brook-Shepherd. A well-done study of one of the more obscure and poorly-understood figures in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the last Emperor (1916-18) Karl I, the "Peace Emperor", who did his very best to stop the slaughter and maintain an empire in which all nationalities would have a serious voice and significant identity; at one point he seriously proposed a Confederation of Republics and Kingdoms rather like the modern British Empire. A very fine read.

[Uh, yeah. And word up to you.]

Larry Peery

Hi there. In case you had forgotten, I still publish *Diplomacy World*, and will continue to do so even if you don't

subscribe, although I've asked you nicely and sent you thirty-nine reminders telling you how wonderful *DW* is and that no true hobbyist can do without it. By "true hobbyist" I mean someone who looks forward to coming home from work (if he has a job) because it means that he can get mail from wonderful people all over the country who share his obsession with a game that involves pretending one is the "Sultan of Turkey", and signing all one's letters in a schizophrenic fashion. If you want to scrutinize every possible opening that ever existed as if it were chess and read Mark Berch's life story in order to increase your DragonsTooth rating so you can make yourself feel important even though 99.9% of the country doesn't have the faintest idea of what a Runestone Poll is, *DW* is for you. I'm even making a big deal out of the fiftieth issue of *DW* because I want people to think that it matters. In fact, to keep in touch with my readers, I have made it a point to spend all of my weekends for the past two years shunning society and publishing this stupid zeen, a fact to which I have attested in a recent *House of Lords*. Sometimes Rod Walker comes over and helps me. That is always a lot of fun. Just a few weeks ago I took the time out to go to Disneyworld to see my pal Goofy on private business. Otherwise, I have nothing to do, so I write stupid letters to zeen publishers informing them of this fact.

DW is only \$13.00 an issue, although if you buy a copy of the hardbound, \$175 Mark Berch Anthology of Articles Which Prove That He Has Nothing To Do Except Waste His Time Analyzing A Silly Game, you can get a 3% discount. If you are on welfare and can get a signed note to this effect from Michael Hopcroft, you can get a complimentary sample. Just send it to Bob O'Donnell, who is the Novice Coordinator, whatever that means.

[Larry Peery is a crazed wacko.]

This is official Bad Boys filler. A recent Bad Boys con was held at the apartment of Steve Clark. All the people who we felt deserved to be there were in attendance. The three of us took the time to make a few telephone calls to several hobby notables. That's right—you, too, can get a Bad Boys conference call for only \$39.95. All proceeds will go to

the Bob O'Donnell Domicile Fund, dedicated to getting Bob a permanent home.

NEWS FLASH!

The Conspiracy of the Unemployed reached epic proportions after the famed Bobby Sacks—Mikey Hopcroft Psychic Mind Link To Warn the Hobby About Fred Davis Being On The Loose At Origins. After somehow escaping from their imprisonment deep in Echo Bay Mines these two hobby nutcases rented a tractor-trailer and rammed their way into Larry Peery's concrete garage, stealing the Dip Archives. Officials in New Hampshire have declined to speculate whether Sacks and Hopcroft were put up to the job as a part of Elmer Hinton's master plan to have the hobby's sole existing archive. They were last seen heading north after picking up a mysterious cross-dresser. Authorities are suspicious because this terrorist act just happened to coincide with the release of Rod Walker's new book, *How to Cross-dress on a Budget*, which hit the bookstores this month. Naturally, Fred Davis has asked everyone in the hobby to put up 100 dollars (or the equivalent in food stamps) to buy back these national treasures. Police believe, however, that instead of demanding money, Pretty Boy Sacks will demand that he be recognized as the sole Miller Number Custodian, and that The Covenant be written into the US Constitution. In addition, Hopcroft has asked very whiningly for people to please accept him into society-at-large. Davis was quoted as saying that these men are probably armed and dangerous, and that he and Andrew Poole plan to take legal action against them at next year's Worldcon. Davis, by the way, is under federal investigation for allegedly making death threats against Dan Stafford.

SURPRISE! FOLD CITY!

Don't tell me you're actually surprised. It seems as if the last few months have been leading up to this, and I've decided that the best thing to do under the circumstances is bag it. I've come to the realization that I just don't have the time to sit around and type this every six weeks, even if I wanted to. Fact is, I've really lost interest in the zine, as it fulfilled none of my expectations. I expected to enjoy myself. I didn't. I expected to communicate intelligently with people. I got illiterate letters. I expected to be able to spin off some of the excess creativity I had. Instead, I wound up preferring to write papers for school than do this stuff. It just isn't worth the time.

My perception of the hobby is a lot different now from what it used to be. When I started, I thought I was entering a well-adjusted environment. Instead, we have people threatening to kill each other because they disagree over the rights to catalog game finishes. Of all the irrelevant crap. Hobbyists writing inane prose in an effort to make up for whatever failings they perceive themselves to have. Polls being organized to give out awards as if this were the Nobel Prize competition. Idiots spending their welfare money on games and then whining about it to the hobby month after month. Give me a severe break.

In case you were wondering, I am not planning to drop out of the hobby entirely. While I find *Diplomacy* to be a very boring game, now, I *am* having fun running a mini-*United* league, which takes up a few hours a months and fits in well with a busy schedule. (The *Diplomacy* games are being turned over to Robert Sacks, as I believe he is some sort of orphan coordinator according to whatever "game board" he is president of. Hear that, Bob? Someone is acknowledging your existence. Aren't you happy?) Running a zine, on the other hand, is something I've found to be too time-consuming and too pointless. Of course, to hear Larry Peery tell it, publishing is one of the five most important tasks facing humankind today. Larry has a great grasp on reality. Of course he does.

Whatever. I suppose I found out by doing this that the hobby isn't something I want to spend a lot of time on. I really didn't have the time to put out those monster issues any more frequently than I did, and even then it was a case of rushing at the last minute to put everything together. I even won second place in the Runestone Poll. Boy, I'll run right out and put that on my resume. That should insure me a job wherever I go, shouldn't it?

Over the next few weeks, all of you subbers should be getting checks back for the unused portions of your subscriptions. Nearly all of you sent ten dollars for ten issues, so you'll have five dollars coming (except for a few who sent more or subbed after #2—I know who you are). Traders, you get the knowledge that no matter what you sent me, you got the better deal. If you expect money for the free issues you got for standing by or whatever, please have a seat and tune in to the reality channel for a moment.

I think that about covers it. Nasty letters to the ex-editor are welcomed. They might even see print in some other Bad Boy publication, such as **Random Thought** or **Furball**. If they do, expect no mercy. We haven't had much luck starting feuds, lately, as too many people thought we were kidding. Can we roll that tape again, please?

I should have done an issue like this eleven months ago.

Hey— game over, dude.

Sober up, please

Since I'm folding, I have to make some decisions about the games I'm keeping. *United* is being run separately so that's not an issue. *Civ* I can handle because I like the game and haven't played it too much. It stays (on a separate flyer). *Dip*, though—I'm sick and tired of it. For God's sake, ITS A STUPID GAME—GET IT THROUGH YOUR FUCKING MINDS—oh, sorry. Because of this, I'm turning the games over to ther GMs. I had originally planned to let Bobby Sacks take care of this, but I've had two GMs volunteer.

- If you are in 1987O (Mokotow), your new GM is Steven Clark, 5425 S. Woodlawn #3B, Chicago, IL 60615. Steve will be running it in **Furball**, his subzine to

- Jeff Zarse's **Random Thought**, which will house 1987N (Zoliborz). Write to Jeff at Hinman Box 284, Hanover, NH 03755. If either of these clowns requires any money from you (heaven forbid), let me know. That's not to say that I'll do anything about it—just "let me know". You goddamn weasels.

Oh, by the way, 1985AQ actually ran to regular deadlines and finished. Ernest Hakey and Melinda Holley got a draw.

OH, AND HERE'S
DAVEY MCCRUNG'S
EN GAME STATEMENT
I FORGOT!
(Goofy Me!)

TAG should follow next week

year's
sure

1:85 AQ The Trees
France David McCrumb standby

The Italy I inherited was in a terrible position. Not only was it still at three centers, the tactical position was atrocious. I tried to correct things by taking the fourth center, but the French attack was too much. I couldn't hold Melinda off and grow, and so stagnated. Turkey was moving west, and so I made an alliance with them to try & push back France. Unfortunately, France had more fleets than us combined, and so continued to throw us back. Turkey was making gains in the Balkans, but he refused my advice to build fleets, instead building armies to ~~fight the Germans~~ back up his ^{other} armies that were holding the Germans back. Eventually, I had to give up on this unproductive alliance before I went under, and so formed an alliance with France. Things went well ~~from the beginning~~ once we ironed out our initial communications problems. Turkey finally got the message that he needed more fleets. His attempt to rectify the deficit by moving his Black Sea fleet to the Med backfired, giving Germany the opening he needed. He took Sev, and had the opening to win the game. ^{Instead} ~~He~~ chose to honor his alliance with France. This was not my favorite standby position ever, but it was interesting. Thank you to Fred, Melinda, Ernest, and Bruce for a good game.

FURBALL

SPECIAL MICHAEL HOPCROFT ISSUE

Subpublisher: Steven Clark, 5425 S Woodlawn #3B, Chicago, IL 60615
312-288-5107

Subsub/Subgame Fees: None

Subgame Openings: Looking for more interested in United.

Currently Feuding With: Conrad von Metzke, Gary Coughlan, Michael Hopcroft,
Bob "Pretty Boy" Sacks, Dave Berk, and possibly several others.

Production #3

1. **Game(s)**: I need two more to fill United, but this really shouldn't matter to you because it will run in RT.
2. **Contest**: Of course I have one.
3. **Offensive Question**: Has been replaced for good by Dumb Quotes.
4. **Slam**: An interview with Michael Hopcroft.
5. **Southman**: Contribution #2 from a rebel living in Alabama.
6. **Dumb Quotes**: Truly idiotic statements by hobby freaks.

Usually, this subzine appears in Zarse's Random Thought. But, like a virus, it has come to parasitize off of BI. You never know where Furball will show up next, spreading slander and insults and ill-will. The Bad Boys of Dip triumverate (Jeff Zarse, Bruce Geryk, and myself) have this statement to release:

We will kill the old man von Metzke. His women will weep for him. We will chop him. We will grind him. We will bathe in his blood. I myself will kill the fool Sacks. I will rip the meat from his bones and suck them dry. I will eat his heart and drag his body through the street. Don't call us a gang. Don't call us criminals. We are the future. Dipdom belongs to the Bad Boys. Soon the world will be ours.

DUMB QUOTES

Some dumb quotes from hobby members:

Bruce McIntyre: There's really nothing to compare with gifts you can give and receive in the hobby...it's like 12 months of Christmas!

Gary Coughlan: My press punishes those who stab me. [Gary, your press is so idiotic, it punishes anyone who reads it.]

Gary Coughlan: I really think that a college degree is unnecessary for those who want to succeed. Look at me, I've got a great job in the Post Office!

Hugh Christie: Dipdom is more than just a hobby. Words will be quite inadequate to express my feelings. [How about "warped" or "freakish" or "obsessive"?]

Doug Williams: I love answering questions. I even mail in the questionnaires in Miss Teen and Women's Week mags under aliases (and in the middle of the night).

Fred Davis: The [dip] archives are located in a two car garage built into the side of Larry's [Larry Peery] building. While the concrete structure is nominally fire and earthquake proof, it is only about ten feet from a busy street named Madison Avenue. A tractor-trailer out of control could make short work of the place. Fortunately they never have icy roads in San Diego. [Fred, you forgot about the danger to the archives from a thermonuclear war. Maybe they should be two miles underground with SAC. I wonder how much it costs to rent a tractor-trailer in SD?]

Jeff Zarse: I'm not saying I'm out of the closet, but let's put it this way -- **Steve Hutton** and I are more than just good friends. [Well, well, Jeff. I bet that's the last time **Geryk** lets you give him a "glad-to-see-ya" kiss.]

Bruce Geryk: Where's the keettee?

Keep those Dumb Quotes coming...

SLAM

Today we have an interview with that famed, unemployed publisher Michael Hopcroft. All responses are actual Hopcroft quotes.

Furball: What is the most embarrassing thing that ever happened to you on a date?

M. Hopcroft: That is hard to say, since nobody recognizes me as a social animal and I don't get to go on dates that often (I am the only man I know who is single by public edict).

FB: Is it because you are a freak?

MH: What?

FB: Sorry, please continue.

MH: I took a girl out to see *Sophie's Choice*. Naturally enough, I paid most of my attention to the movie; enough so that, by the time it was over, I had an intense physical pain in my stomach. It took some effort to get me to her dorm room -- I nearly collapsed on the way -- and we required assistance to get me to my dorm.

FB: How did you spend your Fourth of July weekend?

MH: I spent the Fourth of July at a rather bizarre party.

FB: Do you mean bizarre in the sense that people were enjoying themselves?

MH: Everyone except me...I had just been drogooned into playing a part (tiny, tiny part) in *110 In The Shade*, and someone decided to have a cast party on the Fourth. I turned out to be the first person in (arriving a few hours before everyone else did) and the last to leave. The end result was that everyone except acknowledged tee-totaler me got either stoned or drunk or both.

FB: Would you call that a bizarre party?

MH: Of course. But that paled in comparison with the cast party two weeks later, in which one of our chorines (underage, yet) got VERY drunk and flirted with everyone except me. All of which made me feel more than a little left out.

FB: Is it true that you corresponded with someone in Australia?

MH: Yes, I have had somebody around who was actually interested in what I was doing. That has played a large part in making me the postal obsessive that I am.

FB: What is your response to Mr. Clark's suggestion that freaks should be purged from the hobby?

MH: Purge the hobby? Anybody who would purge the hobby should be purged from the hobby.

FB: Doesn't that mean you should be purged from the hobby because you want to purge would-be purgers?

MH: [No comment given]

FB: What about his contention that you can't swing a dead cat in the hobby without hitting a freak?

MH: I'd rather be in a hobby full of freaks.

FB: Birds of a feather flock together?

MH: What?

FB: What about Steve's *United* league?

MH: I'll think about *United*, but I don't trade with *Random Thought*.

FB: There's this thing called a subscription. It's where you pay a meaninglessly small amount of money (on the order of 60 cents a month). Oh, I forgot, you have no job. Well, I'll bet Jeff takes food stamps.

[Thus ends the first Furball interview.
Note: some emphasis mine.]

CONTEST

Surprise, surprise, there is a contest. The winner gets three free issues of *Random Thought* (with it's marvelous subzine *Furball*). I need to know where the following quote comes from, and how the last line relates to Michael Hopcroft.

Shock brings ruin and terrified gazing
around.

Going ahead brings misfortune.

If it has not yet touched one's own
body

But it has reached one's neighbor
first,

There is no blame.

One's comrades have something to talk
about.

The great prince issues commands,
Founds states, vests families with
fiefs.

Inferior people should not be
employed.

SUBPOENA
Article V Paragraph XIV

November 2, 1987

Mr. Steven Clark
residence;
5425 South Woodlawn
Chicago Illionis
60615

Dear Sir,

Your presence is demanded at Cook County Circut Court,
Friday December 20th 9:30 a.m. in Courtroom M. The charges being
held against you are as fallows;

Illionis State Law Penal Code 313.6 Knowingly plagiarize ideas
both spoken and written.

Illionis State Law Penal Code 618 Publishing or making available
written material harmful and diluting to minors.

Illionis State Law Penal Code 114.97 Publishing or making known
unsrupulous slander and hearsay with intent to damage
individual reputation.

Haden Haworth Attorney At Law has been appointed to your defense.
Any questions that may arise will be answered by him. If Mr.
Clark cannot me the set requirements a notification will need to
be received by Friday November 31st.

Sincerely,



Honorable Judge
William Aderson

WHH:ld
enclosure

SOUTHMAN

How y'all doin'? Jus' got a little joke for y'all.

This yankee, see, goes to this bar in 'Bama, and he goes upta this good 'ol boy and says, "Do you know Bob?" 'Course the redneck, he don't know what the boy's talking 'bout, so he asks, "Bob who?" "Bob on my knob you redneck motherfucker!" Boy, does that yankee sure laugh in his face.

So, the redneck goes up to the bartender, askin' him how to get back at the yankee. So the bartender tells him, "Ask him, 'Do y'all know where Eileen went?' and when he says, 'Eileen who?' you say, 'I lean over and you kiss my ass, yankee bastard.'"

So, ready to show that yankee who's tough, the redneck goes over and asks, "Do y'all know where Eileen went?"

"I think she left with Bob."

Confused, the redneck asks, "Bob who?"

"Bob on my knob you redneck motherfucker!!"



SPOT
THE BAD BOYS!

CANCER RESEARCH

Bruce Linsey made a ploy for extra support for his poll by encouraging pledges of money for cancer research based on the number of votes cast. Bobby-boy Sacks, not to be outdone, has said he will give \$300 for cancer research minus \$1 for each vote in the Runestone Poll. Well, my philanthropism will put both to shame.

Forget this monet shit; I pledge to do one day of cancer research (I am a molecular biologist) for each person who writes to Bruce Linsey and Bob Sacks and tells them both that they are freaks.

